

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

September 10, 2021

The Honorable Chuck Schumer  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

C.C.: House Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Speaker Pelosi, Minority Leader McConnell, and Minority Leader McCarthy:

Thank you for your commitment to investing in our nation's infrastructure and ensuring that every person in the country has access to safe, lead-free drinking water. We respectfully request that you use the budget reconciliation process to help us achieve this vision of ensuring clean drinking water by providing an additional \$45 billion for lead service line replacements to remove every lead service line in the country and \$1 billion for drinking water filtration stations in schools.

Lead is a neurotoxin that can harm every major system of the human body. Our children are especially vulnerable to lifelong health and developmental consequences from exposure. Lead service lines are the primary source of lead in water, and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has estimated there are between six million and ten million homes are served by lead service lines in thousands of communities across the country.<sup>1</sup> In addition, a 2018 Government Accountability Office survey found that only 43% of school districts had tested for lead in school drinking water, and among these, more than a third found dangerous levels of lead.<sup>2</sup>

In the President's American Jobs Plan, he proposed \$45 billion to remove every lead service line in country. The American Water Works Association estimates that the total cost of replacement could exceed \$60 billion.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act has fallen short of this

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Office of Water. "Lead and Copper Rule Revisions White Paper." October 2016, available at [https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-10/documents/508\\_lcr\\_revisions\\_white\\_paper\\_final\\_10.26.16.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-10/documents/508_lcr_revisions_white_paper_final_10.26.16.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Government Accountability Office. "K-12 Education: Lead Testing of School Drinking Water Would Benefit from Improved Federal Guidance." (GAO-18-382). July 2018, available at <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-18-382>.

<sup>3</sup> American Water Works Association. "AWWA Statement on release of American Jobs Plan." March 31, 2021, available at <https://www.awwa.org/AWWA-Articles/awwa-statement-on-release-of-american-jobs-plan>.

vision, providing only a third of the amount originally proposed. In addition, only 49% of the \$15 billion will be in the form of additional subsidization, leaving the rest as low-interest loans. The legislation would also authorize \$200 million for school lead testing and remediation but omitted any direct appropriations to that program.

The water crisis in Flint brought the need for lead service line replacement to the nation's attention. But the problem is not limited to Flint—there are lead service lines in all 50 states, posing significant health risks, especially to children.<sup>4</sup> Recently published data show that 61 million people were served by drinking water systems across the country that detected lead levels that exceeded the limit of 5 ppb set by the Food and Drug Administration for bottled water, which many experts also recommend as a tap water standard.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, according to a Harvard study, “more than 40% of schools around the country appear to have higher-than-recommended levels of lead in their tap water—and most schools are not even testing for lead.”<sup>6</sup> With states across the country facing similar challenges, significantly more funding is needed to deliver full lead service line replacement and ensure safe, healthy schools for our children.

We request that you use the budget reconciliation process to address these shortfalls by providing an additional \$45 billion for lead service line replacements and another \$1 billion for school filtration systems over the next decade. These programs are critical for public health and we can not afford to not invest in them. The funding should be in the form of grants without state-match requirements, and it must be prioritized to environmental justice communities.

Partial lead service line replacements are dangerous and must not receive funding, and to help ensure full-service line replacement, water systems must offer to replace any privately owned portion of the lead service line at no cost to the owner and complete the job of eliminating their lead pipes within 10 years. These key provisions from the bipartisan INVEST in America Act, which passed the House of Representatives earlier this year, would help make good on the promise of providing safe, lead-free water to our communities and our children.

Sincerely,



Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



Daniel T. Kildee  
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

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<sup>4</sup> NRDC, “Lead Pipes are Widespread and Used in Every State.” July 2021, available at <https://www.nrdc.org/lead-pipes-widespread-used-every-state>.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Kristi Pullen Fedinick, NRDC, “Millions Served by Water Systems Detecting Lead.” May 13, 2021, available online at <https://www.nrdc.org/resources/millions-served-water-systems-detecting-lead>.

<sup>6</sup> Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, “Report: Lead levels too high in many U.S. schools.” 2019, available at <https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/news/features/report-lead-levels-too-high-in-many-u-s-schools/>

**Additional Signers:**

Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky  
Congressman Bobby L. Rush  
Congressman Tony Cárdenas  
Congresswoman Brenda L. Lawrence  
Congresswoman Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Congresswoman Diana DeGette  
Congressman Peter Welch  
Congressman Danny K. Davis  
Congresswoman Yvette D. Clarke  
Congressman A. Donald McEachin  
Congresswoman Lori Trahan  
Congresswoman Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Congressman C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger  
Congresswoman Marie Newman  
Congressman Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Congressman Jesús G. “Chuy” García  
Congressman Jerrold Nadler  
Congressman Brian Higgins  
Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee  
Congresswoman Barbara Lee  
Congresswoman Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
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Congresswoman Cori Bush  
Congressman Henry C. “Hank” Johnson Jr.  
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